THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

TEACHER'S AWARENESS AND RESPONSE TO CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE CLASSROOM

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

in

International/Intercultural Education

Department of Educational Policy Studies

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall, 1997

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **TEACHER'S AWARENESS AND RESPONSE TO CULUTRAL DIVERSITY In the CLASSROOM** submitted by Pamela Barry in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Master of Education in International/Intercultural Education.

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Abstract

The classroom is a diverse environment that operates within the larger community of the school. The make up of the school, hence the classroom, varies, and is dependent upon who chooses to attend. It would be unlikely in today's world for a teacher to be presented with a uniform group of students that could be approached and taught using one single methodology. My interest in this issue includes not only the insight and knowledge of teachers regarding this point, but also their response to it in the classroom and the impact on the learning environment.

This study focuses on cultural diversity in the classroom through the eyes of the teacher and their reactions to it upon recognition of this reality. This complicated issue can be both a godsend and a challenge to teachers; presenting an opportunity to strengthen the understanding and common goals of mankind while pushing the limits of patience in dealing with the obstacles that arise from the process of learning and teaching.

The information was gathered from teachers in the Edmonton Public School Board, as well as current sources of literature from the school system and Alberta Education were examined. A literature review was completed to procure recently available information generated by various researchers on the area of culture, school culture, human behavior and development and cultural diversity.

My intent was to establish the perception of teachers regarding cultural diversity and their acknowledgement and reaction to it in the classroom, concluding with recommendations and

suggestions with respect to this issue. The power and position teachers have creates an opportunity to provide their students with a perceptive wisdom to cope with a multifarious society.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my advisor, Dr. Stan Wilson for his guidance and encouragement in my endeavours. Through his support and wisdom I was able to pursue my goals, challenge my principles, and create new knowledge for myself.

I would also like to thank Dr. Ken Ward and Dr. Dave Sande for the interest they took in my study and the opportunity for me to gain from their expertise in education.

I would like to thank my children, Cade and Taryn, for their confidence in me and the responsible manner in which they lead their own lives.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my husband John, whose "go for it approach' to life has inspired me to be a 'lifelong learner'.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The issue of teaching in a culturally diverse classroom environment is a reality for present day teachers. It is shortsighted for teachers to consider this a non-relevant issue, thereby continuing to perpetuate inadequate teaching strategies for the students in this context. Teachers must continually contend with society and the goals of education, endeavoring to keep up with the community values and expectations.

Many teachers teach only from their own perspective, combined with the encouragment by others around them, who embrace like-minded philosophies. This was clearly illustrated in the ethnographic study conducted by George and Louise Spindler, titled Roger Harker and His Fifth Grade Classroom (1951). Harker and his co-workers were convinced that his skills as a classroom teacher were first rate and that all the students were receiving equitable and suitable attention and programs. The results of the study enlightened not only Harker, but others, who learned that the view from where the teacher stands, is only one angle in which to behold the classroom, and that even individual students within the classroom have a perspective worth consideration in the development of the learning environment.

In today's classroom, each teaching situation presents a unique challenge. These situations can cultivate difficulties in the classroom for children, teachers and parents, unless there is first

an awareness, as well as the expertise or willingness, to create the best learning environment possible for all students. This learning environment is a culture constructed by the interactions between the teacher and students, creating the unique challenges.

RESEARCH PURPOSE

The purpose of this research was to conduct a study that would attempt to discover teacher's awareness of classroom culture. Specifically, the study would determine the teacher's awareness of;

1. the culture in the classroom
2. the effect of classroom culture on the student
3. the effect of culture on the classroom
4. the teacher's response to cultural diversity in the classroom.

The study initially explored the concept of culture through the eyes of the teacher and followed with observations of the teacher and students to assist in identifying the effects of the teacher's awareness.

The study allowed for interaction with the teachers to gain information of their preliminary awareness, and subsequently, their perception of cultural impact, (if any) on the classroom environment. The intent was to design a study that demonstrated the effects of a teacher's awareness and response to cultural diversity in the classroom and how it impacts teaching and learning.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Rich postulates:

> ***The purpose of teaching is to help children claim kinship with humanity. This means empowering students to claim full human identity by developing critical thinking and values, as well as understanding the power relations and skills needed to deal with injustice (cited in Ghosh, 1996, p. 89-91).***

Teaching cannot be separated from the socioecomonic, cultural and political aspects of society, as indicated in the literature and conducted research on this topic. The findings however are not necessarily transferred into the structure of many of today's classrooms. Teachers, by virtue of their role in the classroom, containing heterogeneous groupings, are in a position to transform the process of learning. It is their knowledge, leadership and response to cultural diversity that will cultivate an educational system built for diverse populations. The theoretical view of the issue of teacher's awareness of culture in the classroom and how they respond to it, is significant. Just as critical is the establishment of its practical application in the classroom. It is a prerequisite to creating an infrastructure of equality.

> ***A culturally sensitive educator would create learning experiences and environments with the realization thateach learner has a distinctive communication style, learning style, orientation, value system, expectation, and norm which is culturally based and influenced (Powell, 1997, p. 6).***

RESEARCH QUESTION

To allow the for the examination of cultural diversity in the classroom, the ensuing question was persued:

1. Are teachers aware of classroom culture?
2. What is their response to it?

ASSUMPTIONS

The study was founded on the following assumptions: a classroom is comprised of a diverse group of individuals and, that there is an impact within the classroom from this diversity.

The researcher assumed that the teachers involved would have beliefs and attitudes regarding this issue, yet not necessarily be aware or responsive to it.

It was also maintained that the information gathered in the study would be valid.

LIMITATIONS

The primary limitations of this study were:

1. The participants would not necessarily be representative of all teachers.

2. The selection was directed by those individuals who volunteered and fit the established criteria.

3. The tools of ethnography, including interviews and classroom observations were chosen as a means of collecting the data.

4. Follow-up interviews may alter the initial results by allowing the participants time to rethink their views.

DELIMITATIONS

The study was delimited by:

1. Six participants would be included in the study from disparate areas of the Edmonton Public School Board.

2. The study would include teachers from two kindergarten classes, two Grade 1 classes, one Grade 2 class and one Grade 3 class, narrowing the scope of the information.

3. The location of the school and the programs they offer may have an influence on school culture.

4. Although not intended to be gender specific, all six participants were female.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms are clarified here and used consistently throughout the study.

Cross cultural awareness - "being sensitive to the existence and legitimacy of other cultures; understanding and accepting other cultures; and viewing cultural phenomena from the perspective of both the culture in which they occur and another culture, usually that of the viewer" (Powell, 1997).

Cultural Pluralism - "the condition in which cultural groups are able to maintain their collective associations while retaining membership in a macro society" (Powell, 1997).

Culture - "refers to the way in which a group of people responds to the environment. Culture is a way of seeing the world in terms of cognition, emotion, and behavior. It is a concept that is constantly changing" (Ghosh, 1996).

Diversity - differences; including such aspects as race, culture, ethnicity, language, learning, lifestyles, physical or mental handicaps, socio-ecomomic status.

Ethnography - a methodology employed by some qualitative researchers to acquire an insight of the culture of a group of people that are being studied.

School Culture - "a system of beliefs determined by the existence of many cultures" (Ghosh, 1996)

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature examines data that significantly correlate a teacher's awareness of cultural diversity to their respective responses to diversity. The review begins with a discussion of culture and the associated social issues. It then proceeds to a section that reviews school and classroom culture and the implications on education. The section following concentrates on the art of teaching, the complexity of it and the effects of inadequate training or understanding of diversity. Following this the concept of curriculum and its impact on diversity in the classroom is explored. Finally, in the last section, learning environments, with special attention given to the concept of Co-operative Learning, are investigated. The chapter closes with a summary of the review of literature, debriefing teacher's awareness of, and response to, cultural diversity in the classroom.

Culture and Social/Environmental Issues

Culture is defined as " a way in which a group of people responds to the environment. Culture is a way of seeing the world in terms of cognition, emotion and behavior. It is a concept that is constantly changing" (Ghosh, 1996, p. 4). Culture is a "loose, slippery concept", constantly changing, not touchable and "only expressed by the actions and words of its members" (VanMaanen, 1988, p. 3). Pitman (1989, p. 45) states "culture shapes behavior,

but does not determine it". He goes on to say "a cultural map is drawn and redrawn in a lifelong process of social and environmental systematic interaction".

It is important to study culture as it "helps us to gauge and understand the immensely important role of culturally conditioned behavior (Benedict, 1934, p. 20). Jan Brukman (1972) examined the relationship between socialization, process, learning, language and culture by reviewing Bateson's work in Naven(1936) who created, "the shared cognition of people and then the use of these cognitions in actual behavior" (p. 45). Thus, culture is expressed through displayed behavior.

Benedict (1934) quoting a proverb of the Digger Indians, expresses "in the beginning, God gave every people a cup of clay, and from this cup they drank their life". When one part of the cup is broken it creates irreparable damage, but the people still remain. "She adds that "through this shattering of the cup and as the cultures transform, records of extinct cultures, eg. Ancient Greece, Rome, India, and Egypt, to human life are preserved, not in stone but in the pages of monographs" (p. 167).

Obeyesekere comments that "ethnographies are documents that pose questions at the margins between two cultures. They necessarily decode one culture while recoding it for another" (in VanMaanen, 1988, p. 4). Goulet stated that as an ethnographer, "I begin to understand the other culture, not the basis of accumulated data, but when I can relate to my informants dialogically, such that their action makes reasonable sense to me, as mine to them" (1994, p. 17). Thus, the bridge to retaining and understanding cultures is built. Jules Henry, (cited in Contenta, 1993, p. 191). notes that "today, when we think we wish to free the mind so it will soar, we

are still, nevertheless, bound by the ancient paradox, for we must hold our culture together through clinging to old ideas lest in adopting new ones we literally cease to exist".

Contained in Multiculturalism Focus for the 90's (1989), the Government of Alberta, in the charter under Section 15, ensures that "every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, sex, age or physical or mental disability". It goes on to say in Section 27 that its provisions are to be interpreted "in a manner consistent manner with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians" (p. 6). John Kehoe (1984) concludes that "interacting effectively with peers from different cultures, ethnic groups, social classes and historical backgrounds does not come naturally and that today we are expected to build relationships involving diversity in terms of culture, ethnicity, religion, age, physical qualities and gender". He further comments that it is essential "to accept yourself as you are and build a distinct image of yourself as a certain kind of person who has an identity differentiated and desirable from others" (p. 335). This in turn ensures the ability to build relationships with, and be accepting of others.

Thomas, in 1931 stated "cultural knowledge is coded in complex systems of symbols. It involves the definitions of the situation that must be learned by each generation" (in Spradley, 1972, p. 8). Clearly, the intricacy of culture creates difficulty amongst individuals. "Children, through a long process of socialization, are taught to organize their behavior to anticipate the behavior of others and to make sense out of the world in which they

live" (Spradley, p. 9). Through an awareness of their own values they become conscious of their own well-defined cultural assumptions that affect behavior. Consequently, skills to cope within societies framework are developed.

Boberg (1988) believes that children ignore categories that are used to socially categorize people. She agrees that we are a product of our culture, while keeping in mind that biology does play a role. Canada is a pluralistic nation made up of a multiplicity of cultures with individuals conforming to certain rules and beliefs. Canadians are not necessarily prepared to understand others who do not follow the same system, therefore "culture shock" often occurs. Subsequently, it is essential to create a new environment for students and it becomes essential to look at the schooling process from academic and social-cultural perspectives, keeping in mind that this process may also be culturally bounded.

Rothstein (1996, p. 2) states "we cannot understand schooling apart from its relationships to other social and economic forces in modern life". Educational and social reform have become interchangeable concepts. Can our school sysytem, in fact, act as an effective agent of social reform? Fleming (1981) believes that equality of access is imperative and should be promoted as a goal of educational reform and that equality is a core element of democratic idealogy and therefore a politiclal and social ideal. This reminds us, according to Rothstein (1996) of Sigmund Freud's views of "the conflict between society and the individual as an age-old struggle between personal needs and those of the group". Obviously, educational and social reform have strong connections that interact and affect one another.

Bauni Mackay reminisced of past generations in an article that

discussed the building of Canada. "They understood that individual rights are strengthened by focusing on the common good. They valued diversity but cherished oneness and guarded against fragmentation they knew would weaken the social structure and supported a public education system" (1996, p. 33). Maintaining cultural diversity as a focus continues to be important in Canada.

Recently, in Alberta, Bill 24 combined multicultural and human rights issues under one umbrella, corresponding to an overall cut in funding. Bryant Avery of The Edmonton Journal (1996) noted that diminished resources will do little to support the movement towards educational and social reform to meet the needs in todays global world. A letter to the Edmonton Journal by H. E. Mohamed (1996, A 19) suggests that "multiculturalism or ethnicity are steps to getting to be known by the mainstream and thus being accepted on par value. Whatever is one's culture, inner feelings, they must not stand in the way to creating a harmonious whole". Amiel in her commentary in The Edmonton Journal in September stated, "a vision for the 21st century encompassing social and educational reform is to understand that the color of skin or physiognomy is immaterial: for a collective group to cohere, all that is required is that its people, whether black, white or yellow, share the same values and the same purpose". Further, Barry and Laponce (1994, p. 15) purport that ethnicity is going to be more important as we move into the future and it is paramount that we "replace one way mirrors with windows, preferably open windows". Perhaps Boberg (1988, p. 95) says it best with her phrase, "the opportunity of delving into new forms of cultural configuration offers the potentiality of understanding and appreciating human diversity in a very fulfilling dimension".

School and Classroom Culture

People learn culture within the context of everyday life. Therefore the learning process and environment is an important issue since this is how we learn our cultural patterns. Schools and teachers play a critical role in classroom culture. As humans, we take what we've learned from direct teaching from all aspects of our lives, individualize and adapt these cultural patterns, create new ones and then we become who we are (Pitman & Dobbert, 1989). The cultural world we're born in provides individuals with a conceptual framework which lays the groundwork for organizing life experiences. World views emerge, giving each culture its own perspective. Certainly this affects the school, classroom and teaching as learning and culture are related, therefore it is essential to take the cultural dimension into account.

Carnoy states "schools transfer culture and values and they channel children into various roles" (1974, p. 8). This helps maintain the social order. Illich argues "that the net effect of schooling on society is negative. Schooling is distributed in significant measure on the basis of parents' and even grandparents' characteristics-wealth, income, schooling and occupation" (in Carnoy, p. 11). Schools tend to ignore these realities which indirectly perserves stability in the system, perpetuating the idea that the system is sound.

Wyner (1991) suggests that schools have been intractable to change and that culture is the biggest impediment to reform. Sarason concluded "that teachers and administrators were unaware of the cultural and organizational regularities of their school and were not oriented toward using this information to examine organizational and professional realities" (in Wyner, p. 1). Ogbu,

(1982) commented that "the problems faced by many minorities and immigrants in schools today lie here, at the interface between the culture of the home and the culture of the school" (in Brislin, 1986). Understanding how schools work, how the change process evolves; what structures, experiences, requirements and supports are necessary for a desired implementation and institutionalization over time is essential. There is a need to understand how members of the school culture enact their values, social relationships and authority (Wyner).

Urban school culture may be built for affluent, white, middle class families and not necessarily a diverse cultural society. This culture does not work admist the diversities of todays schools. "Urban schools have fallen victim to their own organizational culture" (Parish & Quila, 1996, p. 299). Schools need to transform by searching for new techniques, enhanced staff development and inservicing and positive changes to curriculum. Educators must embrace a transformational process that requires school culture to be changed.

Looking back to 1985 in the Peoples of Alberta: Portraits of Cultural Diversity, it was proclaimed that "schools pay an appropriate and fitting tribute to the variety of individuals and groups who make our schools what they are a vibrant and multi-textured society in which one can experience and be enriched by the cultures and religions of people from every part of the world" (p. 13). Unfortunately, how this was to be accomplished and directions to assist schools and teachers to deal effectively with the realities of diversity was never addressed, creating a lack of direction for educators.

According to Contenta, "schools are encouraged to preserve a

culture that is busy charting its own ruin" (1993, p. 191). They are constantly receiving mixed messages but the status quo is consistently maintained. The economy is the guiding factor in the culture of schools and becomes the main concern when looking at organizational and structural changes. A study conducted by Alan Howard from 1965-1968 in a Hawaiian community, focused on how the educational system was responding to cultural needs. It was found the education system did not accept the validity of divergent values and lifestyles and that it was paramount for children to learn what was necessary for them to survive in a dominant society. The education system creates a need for battle, and if children are forced to respond to what is presented , they must change (Learning and Culture, 1972). This conforms to Contenta's belief that a schools main purpose is to "socialize children in the dominant myths of our culture" (1993, p. 29) and that "education encouraging students to search for personal meaning and caring about social change is of essence" (p. 202) for positive change.

James Ward comments that "schools are an important instrument of social policy (1992, p. 15). Such issues as a child's home culture, lack of supervision before and after school and home environments containing drug, alcohol or violence has a profund impact on what is happening in the schools. Ward further states that "education policymakers need to recognize social trends and understand how they may pose problems for the functioning of schools" (p. 17). He feels the direction we take to solving these issues will be based on a clear understanding of the salient points and an effective response. Ward believes the following issues need to be addressed: 1) to examine the organization of schools, 2) to examine the curriculum and determine a consensus on how to achieve

education for all, 3) to revisit social services and their current structure, and 4) to assess the manner in which schools are funded. He feels that by accomplishing these goals we can embrace cultural pluralism and allow diversity to give us power and strength.

Teachers and schools must meet head on the conditions of cultural pluralism, culture continuity and cultural change, keeping in mind the genetic and physiological factors in relation to the cognitive dimensions as well as the social, structural and ecological conditions that affect the transmission of culture (Learning and Culture, 1972). "The classroom is a cultural amalgam composed of diverse cultural elements and thus can be very different from the mainstream society" (Alan Howard in Learning and Culture, p. 127). Howard goes on to say that classroom culture has two dimensions: the external dimension which classroom practices directly reflect the demands of the dominant culture, such as the community, school and family and the internal dimension that occurs when the students and teacher come together.

Teachers tend to represent upper class norms and come to their classrooms with biases and a lack of understanding for cultures that are unfamiliar (Ghosh (1996). "In heterogeneous societies, teachers work with children whose cultural, linguistic, ethnic, community, religious and intellectual backgrounds are diverse, and therefore only partially understood (Ghosh, p. 84). Teachers are given the power to create interactive educational experiences in the classroom for student development which often leaves students in a precarious position. "It is traditional that a fundamental function of a school and classroom is to sort, judge, and slot students into boxes that bestow dignity on some while trying to withold it from others" (Contenta, p. 57).

Cecilia Pierce from the University of Alabama, completed a 12 week observation on a Grade 7 Social Studies class to determine the learning experiences of at-risk students. She found that the teacher provided a "safe haven" (p. 279) atmosphere. They could risk failure, take chances, stretch their potential and that students participated in the learning process. This enthusiastic teacher provided tremendous support and a positive learning environment for her students. (M. J. McGee, 1991). She provided, as Wyner suggests, an experience in which, "schooling is an opportunity for listening and learning, listening to a different voice" (p. 106).

Parish and Aquila believe that "schools, with the help of teachers, need to become places where ethnicity, cultural differences and social class are not reasons to sort children but sources of enrichment (p. 298). Teachers are the key to transformation and it is necessary to change "the pictures of schools and classrooms in the minds of teachers and principals" (p. 304). Change must be accomplished through collaborative relationships, and a sharing of power.

The concept of public education is in jeoprady and as James Cibulka states in Ward and Anthony, "public schools have been built on a unitary model that favors white, middle class Protestants. Their function was to create an urban discipline that continued the diverse values and cultural traditions that immigrants brought to America. Thus, schools were not really designed to accomodate cultural diversity (1992), p. 22). Postman believes that public schools are threatened and there is a need to redefine schooling as "it is our responsibility to create a public imbued with confidence, a sense of purpose and a respect for learning and tolerance" (p. 18). A perfect local example of change, relates to the 1996 decision of the

St. Albert Protestant School Board, to change their name to the St. Albert Community Schools, which would accomodate all religions. This opens the doors to all students, thus creating a more balanced view of society (Alberta Report, 1997).

Likely, the portrait of classrooms of the future will display a cultural mosaic. Grant Yeo (1996) thinks that a strategic vision for education must include in the planning process representatives from diverse groups. He feels that the factors influencing todays schools are: 1) The emergence of a global society, 2) the comparison of achievement, 3) the changing values and lifestyles, 4) the information access, 5) the special learning needs issues, 6) the equitable use of limited resources, 7) the inclusion of business, industry and community, 8) the parental involvement, 9) the technology movement, 10) the diversification of society, and 11) the declining human and financial resources. All of these intertwined dynamics relate to barriers hampering the development of a more effective education system.

"The major force shaping children and young people in the process of culture acquisition are the same as those that shape and direct all learners, namely, the structures and processes of the entire sociocultural life going on around them" (Pitman, Eisikovits & Dobbert, 1989, p. 3). In The Edmonton Journal in October, Jack Miller from the Ontario Institute for the study of Education in Toronto is quoted as saying that "we're neglecting our interconnectedness with each other, with the earth and with the cosmos". He believes that schools must "develop new rituals and new ways of teaching values that emphasize our interconnectedness instead of our divisions. As well, in this article, Robert Glossop from Ottawa Vanier Institute for the Family concludes that "there's a community responsibility to

provide the next generation with the tools, the lessons and the teachings they need." The school and classroom play a leading role in this process. (Harvey, 1996, p. C4)

The Teaching Process

"Teachers are education's gatekeepers" (Hoerr, 1996, p. 6). Contenta (1993) believes that schools have the wrong focus and should reorganize around learning and not teaching. This would require redefining teaching. Rich defines the "primary purpose of teaching is to help children claim kinship with humanity (in Ghosh, 1996, p. 89). We "must empower students to claim a full human identity by developing critical thinking and values, as well as understanding the power relations and skills needed to deal with injustice" (Ghosh, p. 90). The role of the teacher is very powerful. Teachers must build the uniqueness in each student without promoting an individualistic approach. They must build a community spirit in their classroom and as Nozick says, "bond with others, share feelings and experiences and identify what we have in common; we depend on each other for survival (1992, p. 148), while "validating the worth of each individual" (p. 51).

Paul Vermette (1997) believes that teachers are role models and that they must take their role seriously. A teacher's life is part of the classroom activities and the curriculum content by virtue of them being themselves. Giroux considers teachers to be "cultural workers" (1992, p. 4) who must reexamine their purpose and the meaning of school. He states that "teachers need to be intellectuals to realize that teaching is a form of mediation between different persons and different groups of persons and we can't be good

mediators unless we are aware of what the referents of the mediation we engage in are. The role teachers play has incredible impact on students and Vermette feels that "a passing reference by a teacher, that identifies a trait, quality or characteristic of a person, place or event which promotes a true and more realistic understanding of diversity by identifying his/her/its connection to underrepresented groups can foster and promote a deeper understanding of one another" (p. 39).

Cultural diversity concerns in the classroom are a teaching challenge and the vicissitudes of culture are complex. The interactions between student and teachers are affected by what each brings with them to the classroom and how it is displayed both verbally and non-verbally. Students and teachers can have difficulty moving between two cultural contexts, school and home and there is a need to bring a realness to both. It is thus paramount to consider the effect a teacher's culture has on the learning environment. A study conducted by N. Davis, B. McCarty, K. Shaw, and A. Tabbah from Florida State University investigated the concept of teacher's culture and the possibility and process of establishing a new one to meet the needs of todays world. Case studies of various teaching situations were presented and the reactions recorded. It was found that the roles of teachers needed to be redefined, in order to eliminate some of the constraints. If teachers are to develop a vision for professional change, their teaching needed to be viewed differently. (M. J. McGee, 1991).

Coupled with the culture of teaching is each teacher's personal culture and the impact it has on students in the classroom. Spindler, in 1951, conducted a study of a Grade 5 teacher, regarded by his peers and himself as a fair and equitable teacher for all students.

However, the complete ethnographic study, revealed that even though he assumed he was approaching all students the same, the results indicated that he was indeed affirming their place in the social structure. His underlying beliefs were guiding the successes of individual students without him being aware of it. Clearly, the clash of culture within the confines of a classroom challenges the teacher in many ways, whether one is aware of it or not.

Contenta (1993) maintains that it is not the content taught but the process practiced that is important. Freire stated that "teaching methods can have diverse effects: they can make reality opaque or illuminated" (in Gosh, p. 107). It is essential for teachers to be aware of the school environment, structure, and curriculum and how these create inequalities. However, Sarason in 1982 "concluded that teachers and administrators were unaware of the cultural and organizational regularities of their school and were not oriented toward using this information to examine organizational and professional realities". Wyner feels there is a "clash of values and expectations" and it is important to "push the awareness of the present, to change the realities and possibilities of diversity within these settings" (Wyner, preface, p. xv). Many feel that the role of teaching is to force students to think, not to transfer knowledge and that a teacher's goal should be to pose problems that challenge students thinking. For example, "liberatory education should provide students into challenging and rethinking the way we see reality" (Ghosh, p. 107).

Since "teachers mediate the messages and symbols communicated to the students through the curriculum, it is important for them to come to grips with their own personal and cultural values and identities in order for them to help students

from diverse racial, ethnic and cultural groups to develop clarified cultural identities and to relate positively to each other" (Sleeter, 1991, p. 139). Teachers influence the way messages are sent to their students. For example, the difference between a teacher who says Christopher Columbus discovered America and one who says when he came to America he met many diverse cultures, sends a completely different message to students. As Green concluded in 1987, a teacher's role is to provide "meaningful, instructional experiences by using all available resources, including social, environmental and cultural, as well as verbal, emotional and sensorimotor capacities to help children construct coherent systems of meaning about the activity or subject matter" (in Wyner, p. 127).

Teachers need to integrate their students unique qualities and abilities in the classroom daily. A case study directed by Richard Warren focused on bilingual-bicultural education programs and the impact they have on cultural heterogeneity in the public school system. He observed a school on the California-Mexico border with students and teachers from many cultures. He discovered that by allowing students to use whatever language served them best when expressing themselves enforced the worth of their ethnic culture, the bond between language and culture and their success in school. Since teachers design the structure of the classroom, "they must themselves learn to be flexible so that they can redesign their lesson plans to take advantage of the ways their students typically learn new material in their everyday lives" (Brislin, Cushner, Cjerroe & Yong, 1986, p. 201).

Teachers are the key to all reform, hence a need for more support and control over their jobs. A journal and ethnographic study conducted by Mary Jean Romma Herzog of 13 graduate teachers

in North Carolina concentrated on their thoughts regarding teaching. She found that the majority of their concerns were relative to the conditions of teaching; relationships with children and colleagues and factors affecting professional identity. Herzog concluded that teachers need to participate in school change, maintain a democratic participation and have the freedom and power to make decisions that are best for their students, thus beneficial to them as teachers (McGee, 1991). Bernard Shapiro says teachers need to be raising social issues but must be cautious as to how this is done. "How you balance just accepting the status quo and trying to nudge it along a bit, that's the challenge. How do you go just far enough so that you sharpen people's edges without jumping out of a twentieth-storey window" (in Contenta, p. 196). Wyner suggests that within the culture of the organization, teachers can be hired to create or fit a certain environment. She infers "diversity amongst teachers in the school, rather than allowing the culture to stabilize and self-perpetuate" (p. 86) will develop an environment in which role modelling occurs.

Boberg (1988) identifies guidelines for teachers to follow in any teaching situation to accomodate for the wide dimension of students to celebrate the richness of human diversity: 1) to learn as much as you can about a cultural situation first as you can before entering into it, 2) to expect exceptions to cultural rules, 3) to accept each person as an individual first, 4) to help minority children to feel accepted, and 5) to act out of their own values-know yourself and go with it.

Banks (1973) holds the belief that teachers must make a committment to making a humane society. The classroom creates ongoing intercultural transactions in which teachers and students

begin to define the significance of their lives and histories. "The vital area of man's purpose and existence on this earth becomes the primary focus of his educational experience and the point position at the frontier of knowledge" (Barbara Sizemore in Banks, p. 99). Giroux (1992) surmises that teachers must: 1)provide students with the opportunity to become critical citizens, 2)have an active role in shaping the curriculum, and 3)link learning in the schools as well as extending it to shape public life and social relationships.

The struggle of teacher education programs to provide preservice teachers with skills to work with a diverse population is apparent. Since teachers arrive at their training as monocultural individuals, Banks & Banks believe it is essential to address: "the elimination of educational discrepancies; and the development of attitudes/beliefs, knowledge, and skills to function sensitively and responsively in our increasingly diverse democratic schools and society" (in Pohan, 1996, p. 62). Cathy Pohan conducted a study to determine the views of preservice teachers with respect to diversity and how it affects their personal lives and what they assume about teaching in classrooms and schools that are diverse (1996). She discovered that not much has changed over the years regarding the attitudes of diversity in preservice teachers upon entry into their teacher training. Pohan concluded that it is necessary for required courses in diversity to be instituted into teacher's programs. Also, it is necessary to experience a variety of situations to expose preservice teachers to new cultures and to explore their beliefs relative to diversity. Dr. Katy Lux from North Central Learning Styles Centre in Michigan is currently conducting a study to determine the biases of preservice and practicing teachers towards diverse cultural groups using a questionairre, synthesizing

information, informing participants of the results, and then retesting again after an appropriate interval (Learning Styles Network, 1996). This research is focusing on an important area of teaching and will give direction to future teacher training programs.

Ghosh claims there is a great need to transform teacher education programs (1996). In a study in 1993, Milligan found that in Canadian and Australian Universities there were virtually no mandatory courses related to diversity (in Ghosh, 1996). Ghosh comments that there is "no attempt to discuss the idealogical dimensions of the teaching process" (p. 84). Contenta goes on to note that "training that attempts to provide new teachers with the ability to understand the social practices that reproduce inequalities is virtually non-existent" (1993, p. 126). In addition, Friere, in 1992 discussed that as beliefs are resistant to change, teacher training programs and the attitudes regarding diversity will not occur without reflection and action, likely over a period of time (in Pohan, 1996).

In an article titled "Becoming Architects of Communities of Learning: Addressing Academic Diversity in Contemporary Classrooms" it was stated that "it is important to understand the early pilgrimages of teachers in thinking about and addressing learning needs of academically diverse populations in general classroom settings" (Tomlinson, Callahan, Tomchin, Eiss, Inbeau & Landrum, 1997, p. 270). "In an effective community of learning, there will be varied roles and tasks for students which stem from acceptance of and respect for their diversity" (p. 280).

As teachers are engineers of multifarious communities of learning, it is essential for them to understand that through their preservice training and beyond, that "learning to teach is a lifelong

process" and one must be continually aware of "replacing conceptions and ideas based on idiosyncratic experience with ideas and practices based on research and the wisdom of collective practice" (Wyner, 1991, p. 215).

Curriculum

Paul Loranger, in an article written in the Alberta Teachers Association News Magazine, commented that "perhaps one of our greatest shortcomings as a society is that we see the benefits of living under one culture and fail to recognize the long-term value of cultural diversity".

He continues with the premise "you cannot teach yesterday's lesson to today's students" (1996). The following quote from William Gerler in Boberg (1988) captures the essence of the majority of students on arrival to a structured school setting:

> ***"A kindergarten teacher was showing her children an illustration of a lion and lioness. "Can anyone tell me the difference between these?" asked the teacher. "I know," said one little boy, "One just got a haircut."(p. 84)***

By allowing ourselves to, as Loranger put it, "to encourage cultural exploration in our classes" (ATA, 1996) we celebrate the value of learning from other cultures and the diversity of individuals and their learning needs, causing us to address our individual biases and prejudices that may be barriers to mutual respect and support.

In Canada, cultural diversity characterized the earliest

societies. The Canadian Parliament recognized Canada as a multicultural country in 1971. In 1987, Building the Canadian Mosaic included the statement, "multiculturalism is evolving into a policy that attempts to address all Canadians. It recognizes the diversity of the cultural origins of the Canadian population. All Canadians have a cultural background which forms the essence of Canada's cultural diversity, that is multiculturalism" (p. 19). This was a step towards recognition of our nation's diversity. In 1988, Alberta Education incorporated a multicultural component in the Social Studies Curriculum, following a study of 161 written briefs and 246 oral presentations from representatives across Alberta (Multiculturalism-Focus for the 90's). Apparently Albertans acknowledged the opportunity in this country to connect and learn from others.

John Kehoe discusses curriculum when he makes the point "that what is frequently done in school is ineffective most of the time and what needs to be done requires careful planning and careful consideration of the nature of the population" (1984, p. 29). He proceeds with the vision that "teachers can develop strategies with the explicit intention of transmitting information but with the implicit assumption of improving understanding or appreciation" (p. 29). A study completed in 1939 called the Springfield Plan was a program developed to determine a need for tolerance to be taught in schools. The group was divided into two and one was provided with a specific cultural diversity program. The findings supported Banks research in which he found that the focus of instruction needed to be such that diversity was taught specifically and that curriculum needed to provide a more balanced content (in Vermette, 1994).

Another study conducted by Christine Langone in 1989 focused

on two innovative curriculum projects in Georgia purporting a new focus on programs. She concluded, "the individual teacher's role in effecting change is an important factor in implementation of curriculum but organizational factors also play an important role because they affect a teacher's efforts throughout the process of curriculum change" (McGee-Brown, 1991, p. 312).

A conference held in Edmonton sponsered by the Edmonton Viets Association and the Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations addressed the issue of cultural differences and how students, teachers, parents, school administrators and community leaders could unite to create change. It also identified the need for a committment to multiculturalism, involvement of minorities in the development of programs, better teacher training and incorporation into the curriculum (Simons, 1996).

Contenta (1993) has noted that the hidden curriculum shapes the behavior of students and designs people that heed the status quo. The hidden curriculum as defined by Beauchamps and Parsons "works to structure the actions of both teachers and students...neither students nor teachers are specifically aware of when it works and because no one thinks about its impact is hidden" (1992, p. 26). For example, the structure created by bells, time blocks, and various facts that are taught and learned daily combined with the expectations of students and teachers alike to adhere to this structure, is often made without consideration of potential ramifications. Furthermore, in the curriculum, the materials selected tend to focus on a small segment of the population, completely ignoring the diversity that exists (Apple, 1990). Apple recommends a suggestion for eliminating the hidden curriculum would be to introduce conversation regarding political and social

aspects of society, providing students with tools to effectively make decisions. Kehoe believes that "the hidden curriculum of the school would need to change dramatically" (1984, p. 9) with a balance amongst all the diverse factions that exist in the school. In addition, he feels that to accomplish this would require "cooperation, patience and a real desire on the part of each of us to make it work" as well as "the school and staff needing assistance in making the changes in the curricula and the structure of the school" (p. 9). As a result the hidden curriculum would become a visible component of daily education.

Brislin (1986) maintains that there are no set of written materials that can nullify the intense feelings people experience within their cultures. Teachers are obviously in a powerful position to either ignore or provide an opportunity to build understanding in their classrooms.

John Kehoe (1983) contends that cultural programs may only better inform students regarding diversity but have no affect on their attitudes or beliefs. He suggests that teachers could incorporate the following into their programs to encourage growth in this area: 1) to highlight similarities, 2) to place significance on everyday family life of the students, 3) to create related activities and invite guest speakers, 4) to emphasize achievements of diverse cultures and, 5) to point out positive information regarding diversity in the media and curriculum.

The Awareness Series: Special Needs Brochures have been published by the Alberta Education Special Education Branch, to equip teachers with information regarding such issues as hearing loss, cerebral palsy, fetal alcohol syndrome, learning disabilities, visual impairments and emotional disturbance (EPSB, This Week,

1995). Being informed about these and other diverse matters is vital in today's classrooms.

Keenan, Willett, and Solsken (1993) propose a "curriculum partnership in which parents are invited to participate in the development of the classroom curriculum, allowing for teachers and parents together to chart the direction of the program congruent with the cultural influences in the particular school" (in Barta and Winn, 1996, p. 29). This is supported in the research completed by Howard in 1993 focusing on the influence of parental attitudes and the effect of their cultural isolation on their children. He discovered that "when parents involve themselves and their children with people of other races, ethnicities, or cultural traditions, positive attitudes develop as misperceptions are replaced with human understanding and acceptance" (in Barta and Winn, p. 29). Teachers must consider how parents can be committed to, and supportive of, a curriculum including cultural diversity.

To summarize the elusiveness and magnitude of diversity is likely impossible. However, as Pat Boyle states "in the last two centuries, devasting judgments have been made about people because of differences...cultural or racial groups have been marginalized as inferior...but we have come to realize that differences don't imply better or worse (1996. p. 7). She adds that "schooling needs some re-thinking" (p. 8) and we must as educators be prepared to determine how students learn and above all be willing to learn from them and realize the value in doing so. Boyle concludes her article with the comment that "educators must continue to remind the public that what we want our students to achieve is far more complex than either an answer sheet or a balance sheet, and that what is fair is as important as what is expedient" (p. 8). It becomes

apparent from the literature that educators are at the forefront of restructuring curriculum to encompass elements that embrace cultural diversity.

Learning Environment

"Within a relationship, a community, an organization, a society or a world, the goal is not to assimilate all groups so that everyone is alike. Thegoal is to work together to achieve mutual goals while recognizing cultural diversity and learning to value and respect fundamental differences (Kehoe, 1984, p. 24). This was supported by Johnson & Johnson in 1989 in which they concluded that a rise in production, creativity and problem solving occurred when there existed amongst the collaborators a spectrum of cultural and ethnic environments (in Hymel, Zinck & Ditner, 1993). Geertz "concluded it's necessary to enlarge the possibility of intelligible discourse between people quite different from one another in interest, outlook, wealth, and power, and yet contained in a world where tumbled as they are into endless connection, it is increasingly difficult to get out of each others way" (1988, p. 106). Certainly, there seems to be considerable justification for cultivating understanding of diversity within the classroom.

Schools are often an environment where students learn to recognize their shortcomings and inadequacies and are not made aware of their strengths. Howard Gardner in Frames of Mind discusses how we view and teach our students and the consequences of our approaches (in Hoerr, 1996). Ghosh comments that how teachers react to difference is important because of how this difference affects their learning (1996). She states that "studies

show that motivators, learning styles, behavior patterns and aspirations vary between cultural groups" (p. 91) and that if this is not considered in the classroom, a system of disparity is created. There is definitely a need for diversity in teaching methods. Bowman in 1994 found "there was variability in normal children's development patterns" (in Ghosh, p. 94) and that diversity in teaching will meet the development needs of the students.

Livingstone (1987) maintains that children need to learn in different ways. A Norwegian psychologist, Hilde Jangard, in 1978, researched learning styles and found that it is not necessary to offer the disadvantaged less theory but theory in a different way (in Livingstone, 1987).

A study by Michael Rutter in 1979 titled Fifteen Thousand Hours focused on 2000 students in 50 schools and discovered that working class students did better in effective schools, than middle class students in bad schools. He found that schools can make a difference and are more important than background factors. "Changes in teaching methods and teacher attitudes, among other things, can significantly improve the performance of students" (in Contenta, 1993, p. 74).

Another similar 1986 investigation in a junior high working class neighborhood, observed teachers instructing the basics to prepare students for useful lives outside of school. The students sat passively and listened and the teachers believed the students achievement correlated to their homelife. They concluded that "the school served as a public institution in which students learned to comply with the requirements of authority figures and experienced subject matter that was boring and not made relevant to their lives" (Grant & Sleeter, p. 65).

Erickson (1986) noted that "teachers are intercultural brokers in a position to bridge cultural gaps that exist in the classroom" (in Wyner, p. 126). The teacher has the dominant culture and most often Canadian teachers are from the majority culture. Often, if students are not succeeding, the blame is placed squarely on the students for not being academically successful. Wyner believes that there is a great need to understand how all aspects of society comes together in a class to form classroom culture. "Culture influences standards of perceiving, believing and evaluating; it plays an important role as teachers select and structure experiences in their classrooms" (1991, p. 125). Therefore, Contenta (1993) insists that we must broaden what is defined as intelligence. Hoerr (1996) contends that by understanding that there are multiple intelligences, teachers will view students individually, thus be able to provide a variety of learning experiences to meet the disparities in the classroom. He goes on to say that "children need to understand their intrapersonal intelligences, which is internally having a clear perspective of oneself, and interpersonal intelligences, which "students need to learn to understand others' perception, not just assume that everyone sees the world as they do" (p. 41). This will provide them with a greater potential for learning. He believes that this must be consciously taught by teachers in the classroom setting. Simon, in 1987, points out that he is "advocating bridging school knowledge or public knowledge and students' own cultural knowledge, thus encouraging students to analyze their interaction and then use the knowledge learned to take charge of their circumstances" (in Sleeter, 1991, p. 66).

Cooperative Learning

Friere (1970) noted that knowledge is not exclusively to be distributed from the teacher to the students. Students, teachers and knowledge should all be at the centre of the learning process. Teachers learning along with their students, facilitating and designing new knowledge and skills is considered by Ghosh to be a positive learning environment (1996). Engagement and dialogue must occur in the classroom, the sensible starting point being the students daily lives, producing comfortable discussion. Prickles, in 1985, argues that "the task of education then is to engage students in a dialogue with the commomplaces of their world in order that they can: 1)understand and hold on to the commonplaces that are significant, 2) transcend those commonplaces which are parochial and constraining and, 3) change those commonplaces which they judge to be wrong" (in Sleeter, 1991, p. 67). A teacher's role is to assist students to express, evaluate and develop their own values and action plans (Sleeter, 1991). This relates to what McLaren in 1989 defines as empowerment, "the process through which students learn to critically appropriate knowledge existing outside their immediate experience in order to broaden their understanding of themselves, the world, and the possibilities for transforming the taken-for-granted assumptions about the way we live" (in Sleeter, p. 3) and the necessity for teachers to provide these opportunities.

Paul Vermette, through his research in 1994, reports that Cooperative Learning promotes positive, culturally diverse education by developing "tolerance of diverse populations, understanding and respect for those who hold different opinions, increased appreciation for the democratic process and improved achievement across racial, ethnic, gender and social class variables (1997, p. 29).

It can, as Sleeter states, "create the conditions for reversing inequality, producing egalitarian social structures and caring relationships where diverse people can work together toward common goals" (p. 165). She sees a cooperative classroom containing the following principles: 1) a democratic structure, 2) students taking responsibility for themselves and others and, 3) heterogeneity and diversity being respected.

Cooperative learning incorporates an assortment of teaching techniques. It primarily involves common goals for the individual as well as the group, having the group being responsible for one another, therefore providing motivation to work together (Cushner, McClelland & Safford, 1992). Kagan, in his study of children's play in Mexico, discovered that rural children were much more cooperative and urban children more competitive. He was extremely concerned over this and began to study ways to change the urban situation. Kagan found that cooperative learning was a teaching technique that brought about positive results in developing the ability to work and get along with a variety of people. An example he gave of using this system is called Numbered Heads Together, and is a method of questioning in the classroom. The students are arranged into groups of 4 (heterogenous) and when the teacher asks a question all the group members work together to come up with the answer. This offers a supportive learning environment in which children can build confidence (in Cushner, McClelland & Stafford, 1992). It must be noted however, that cooperative learning "does not imply either devaluation of individual contributions or lack of individual accountability...it generally includes task specialization, or determination of group scores for team assignments as a component of the activity" (Cushner, McClelland & Stafford, p. 303).

Therefore this kind of learning offers a universal educational experience.

Taylor Collegiate, a senior high school in Atlantic Canada, in response to a requirement from the school district for identifying necessary, changes made the decision to move to a cooperative learning format (Sheppard & Brown, 1996). Research by Johnson in 1984 enlightened them to the fact that "when properly implemented, cooperative learning had the potiential to contribute to higher academic achievement, the development of social skills, greater intrinsic motivation, improved attendance, higher self esteem, increased time-on-task, improved attitudes toward school and subjects taught, and improved behavior (p. 2). They set out as a group to learn the new learning style and implement it in their school. The results (although not formal measures at this point) are favorable. "Teachers believe that the school has fostered a culture that is conducive to learning: Students and teachers have learned the power of cooperation, students are engaged in developing their social skills each day; they have become more tolerant of student differences; all students feel a sense of belonging and self worth as their contribution to the group is valued, and behavior problems have been significantly reduced" (p. 5). Cooperative learning provided the school, teachers and students the opportunity to change the concept of their education and foster new growth and development in the idealology of learning.

DeVoe determined in 1977 that it is apparent that not all students will benefit from cooperative learning unless properly prepared for it (in Grossman, 1995). There are several recommendations that should be considered prior to creating an effective cooperative learning program, not the least of which

includes; 1) familiarize oneself with all the ideas regarding cooperative learning; 2) acquaint the students with the program and ensure they know what the guidelines are; 3) familiarize the leadership role to all students; 4) teach the students that all members of the group take an active role in the activities; 5) be conscious of different learning styles and give support to those who have a more difficult time grasping the concept; and 6) observe the groups carefully and intercede when necessary. Grossman concludes his praise of cooperative learning with the statement, "since we live in an increasingly interdependent society, we are ethically bound to both teach and model collaborative learning and cooperative activity, for with it comes the possibility of survival, justice and peace" (p. 312).

Wyner (1991) contends "the challenge is to develop inclusive learning, teaching cultures through ongoing strategies that support reflection, dialogue, positive working relationships and sustained staff development, enabling all teachers to participate in educational change and effective teaching" (p. 103). She notes revised educational goals and a rethinking of the working lives of teachers are essential to this change. Further, she goes on to iterate that in order to change the culture of teaching one must improve communication, increase cultural knowledge, increase parental involvement, give time for reflection, and restructure if necessary.

Finally, the learning environment paves the way for student success. Erickson and Mohatt in 1982 expressed that "we can assume that all students are learning something...not necessarily what the teacher and school claim...in the context of...the local meaning systems that are created as teachers and students

influence one another...the particular means they constuct for collaboratively accomplishing (their) ends are expected to vary across each specific classroom, and...can only be discovered by studying particular instances in close detail, since the universal principles are realized in ways that are locally unique" (in Pitman, Eisikovits, & Dobert, 1989, p. 53).

Summary

"It is the diversity of cultural knowledge that leads us to misunderstanding and conflict" (Spradley, 1972, p. 31). As was stated in the Final Report of the Committee on Tolerance and Understanding in 1984, "the challenge lies in changing the focus of teaching and learning in the classroom (p.175). Intercultural education recognizes the need to bring people together so that they learn about each other's cultures through interaction and shared experiences" (p. 159).

There was a significant amount of literature found applicable to cultural, social and environmental issues. Authors such as Rothstein (1996), Boberg (1988), Thomas (1931) and Pitman (1989) seem to suggest that the relationship between these concepts and education are inexorably linked. Benedict (1934) and Obeyesekere (1994) expressed the value in recording historical aspects of culture. Recently, Bill 24 in Alberta (1996) alluded to the need for opening doors to the global world through educational and social reform and Barry and Laponce (1994) supported this view.

The culture of the school and classroom and the perpetuation of the status quo have been established as playing an integral role in the learning environment, as indicated by Contenta (1993), Carnoy

(1974), Wyner (1991) and Parish & Quila (1996). Howard (1972), Postman (1995) and Cibulka (1992) highlighted the problems that related to classroom diversity.

The role of the teacher is a formidable responsibility, one which must be approached with knowledge and awareness as was implied by Ghosh (1996), Saranson (1982), and Vermette (1997). The process of teaching requires a teacher's cognizance of their own identity first, and the insight to ensure their culture does not interfere with the student's learning. Contenta (1993) and Sleeter (1991) contend that this is the basis for building education.

A number of authors have discussed the effects of a multicultural curriculum relative to the building of Canada. Kehoe (1994), Langone (1989) and Contenta (1993) agreed that curriculum development based on diverse issues is essential for the transmission of information. Brislin (1986), Apple (1992) and Contenta (1993) contend that extraneous or hidden curriculum experiences can have a profound affect in the classroom.

The learning environment, was reviewed by Geertz (1988), Gardner (1996), Jangard (1978) and Rutter (1979) who agreed that student performance could be substantially enhanced as a result of teaching methodology. Additionally, Friere (1970), Prickles (1985), Vermette (1994) and Sleeter (1991) argued that it was critical for teachers to promote a cooperative and culturally diverse learning environment.

"The beliefs we hold about teaching and learning guide our actions in the classroom, even if we do not consciously think about them on a daily basis" (in Every Child Can Learn, 1992, p. 11). It is, imperative that educators explore the issue of cultural diversity and integrate it into their world of teaching and learning.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

INTRODUCTION

The research question in the study required a qualitative approach, referring to "the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols and descriptions of things" (Berg, 1989). Within the framework of qualitative research, an ethnographic model was chosen, as it would likely deliver the data necessary to enhance the study.

RESEARCH PLAN

Research Problem

Many teachers may not be aware of their own culture and their student's culture and the impact this has on teaching and learning. The purpose of this study is to examine teacher's awareness of cultural diversity in the classroom and their response to it.

Research Methodology

An ethnographic model of research was chosen as the methodology as "it contributes to basic research through 'grounded theory', essentially an inductive strategy for generating and confirming theory that emerges from close involvement and direct contact with the emperical world" (Paton, 1990, p. 5). It was the purpose of this study to look for links and patterns from the data collected and relate a perspective of the community that enlightens the reader. Ethnography allows the ethnographer to make clear how people behave, including their distinctive characteristics, and to determine the meaning we as humans attach to certain actions. By doing this the ethnographer is "making inferences" (Spradley, 1973, p. 3) and "reasoning from what we perceive or what we assume" (p. 8). The aim of an ethnographer is to reach an extremely narrow point in the study, in which minute details are discovered to support their findings. As suggested by Geertz, "the researcher's task is to convey 'thick description', such that a wink can be distinguishable from an actual wink" (cited in Berg, 1989, p. 52).

Ethnographies are multi-purpose studies used to evaluate an individual within a group. The study presented here clearly lends itself to the methodology of ethnography, providing an inside view of the teacher's perceptions of cultural diversity in the classroom. The researcher has borrowed some of the tools of ethnography including; the interview process, observations in the classroom, note taking, transcribing and interpreting the data collected through a written document. It is understood that abstracting while utilizing this methodology can impact society in many ways, therefore it is important to consider the purpose of synchronizing the needs of

people with the goals of ethnography and not simply with the process of gathering information for the sake of it (Spradley, 1987).

Participants

Six participants (informants) were involved in the study. They were chosen initially based on their interest and their present level of teaching in kindergarten, Grade 1, 2 or 3. Six informants allowed for a significant amount of information to be gathered by adopting certain ethnographic techniques that elicited data that ultimately triggered associations between actions, words and meanings in the data analysis. The participants each had a minimum of five years of teaching experience. The study created a cross section of the population of teachers and students by involving six different elementary schools from various areas of the city.

Research Site

The research was conducted at the teacher's respective schools or homes, with the intent being able to have them respond while immersed in their educational environment or a place of comfort, hence developing a rapport. This followed with half day observations in their classrooms and a follow-up interview to resolve any missing issues.

Interviews

The ethnographic interview can be viewed as "a series of friendly conversations into which the researcher slowly introduces new elements to assist informants to respond as informants (Spradley, 1979, p. 58). Preceeding the interview, the specific research question is formulated along with developing a variety of added questions. However, it is essential that the design of the interview be adaptable. Rubin & Rubin insist that "the design takes shape gradually, as the researcher listens and hears the meaning with the data" (1995, p. 43). Further, they believe that qualitative interviewing should be flexible, to allow for modifications and adaptations to the directions the interview takes; iterative, to allow for the narrowing of the focus of the research and affirming by analysing and testing the identified themes; and continuous, to allow for ongoing evaluation and redesign of the questions and collection of information related to the topic.

The interviews conducted in this study made use of an audiotape session lasting approximately two hours, followed by a half day classroom observation, concluding with a brief follow-up interview, consisting of specific questions related to the research question. The first interview preceeded the observation to offer insight into the teacher's perspective on the issue of cultural diversity in the classroom. This also cultivated a relationship between the participant and the interviewer, developing a rapport and providing the teacher with the opportunity to function naturally while being observed. The researcher's bias regarding the significance of cultural diversity in the classroom and the need for teacher's awareness exists, however the interview process

employed, directed that the questions asked, come from the teacher's responses. The goal of the researcher in the study was to show respect and sensitivity towards the teacher and the culture by allowing the informant to guide the interview.

Observations

"Researchers who employ the tool of observation atempt to capture, in detail, the conduct of life in the particular setting in which they are immersed" (Wilcox in Spindler, 1982, p. 460).

The observations in this study followed the initial interviews. They attempted to: 1) see from the teacher's perspective; 2) describe the details of the situation; 3) contextualize the environment to a broader context; 4) process into the context of social interaction; 5) create a flexible research philosophy excluding assumptions regarding the teachers; and 6) evade labelling the participants hastily with theories and concepts that could prove to be unsuitable (Bryman in Silverman, 1993).

To ensure success, field notes were written, further elaborated notes were logged following the observation, the spatial organization of the classroom was recorded, and a fieldwork journal was maintained to note any questions or concerns.

Data Analysis

The analysis in an ethnography is an ongoing procedure which begins immediately. It encompasses different levels by using a variety of tools. According to Goodenough an ethnographer's task "was not to describe a culture as it was revealed but to construct a

culture out of what was observed" (in Spindler, 1982, p. 87). Keeping up to date with note taking throughout the study eases the final compilation of results. The role of the ethnographer is to gather data, synthesize it and combine ideas and information to draw conclusions. This obviously employs an ethnographers own thoughts and any other theorist's material they have examined. The idea is for them to construct an image by looking for patterns of thought and behavior through their continuous exploration. They will know if they have been successful if the results are clear to the natives of the group as well as to their colleagues. According to Fetterman "analysis is as much a test of the ethnographer as it is a test of the data" (1989, p. 88).

Triangulation is another important basis for analysis in ethnography (Fetterman, 1989). It consists of evaluating one reference against another in order to validate a theory. It allows the researcher to put the collected information into a whole story by searching for consistencies from within. It accomplishes this by analysizing the interview and observation in three ways:

1. what they say
2. what they do
3. what is written.

This process can be considered beneficial, as it equips the ethnographer with three different ways of viewing the data.

This study involved exploring teacher's awareness of cultural diversity and the response shown regarding this diversity. Diversity is defined as differences. In order to survey the perception and reaction to differences, the following procedures were undertaken:

1. field notes recorded at the end of each interview
2. field notes recorded ongoing throughout each observation

3. audiotapes recording the initial interview and later transcribed for analysis
4. a recorded map of each classroom's layout to confirm the flow of activity
5. written record of the follow-up interview by each participant
6. crystallization, (a synthesis of the ideas that are similiar) of the data.

Triangulation was a technique utilised in this study employing the tools of interviews, observations and follow-up interviews, permitting the researcher to construct relationships and connections that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Ethical Considerations

The Department of Educational Policy Studies provided the researcher with the policies and procedures for a research ethics review which was followed accordingly and approved. Each participant received a letter explaining the intent of the research and the goal to provide anonymity and confidentially. They were informed of the manner in which the information was to be collected and used and what would be done with the audiotapes upon completion of the project. Written consent was received from each participant. Each participant also understood that at any time they could remove themselves from the study. The research was undertaken with complete openness and at the conclusion of the organization and analysis of the data, available to the participants for approval. A secondary purpose of this study was to assist or affirm with teachers concerning their awareness of classroom

culture and diversity and empower them with any opportunities to strengthen and enrich their teaching experiences.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis Techniques

The central purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' awareness of cultural diversity in the classroom and their respective responses to it. Data analysis commenced directly following the completion of each interview and observation. "Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 153). The data collected was first reviewed for the purpose of discovering "emergent" themes (Skau, 1996). A process of comparison ensued, "allowing the researcher the ability to generate theoretical properties of the themes" (Hampton, p. 277, 1993). Glasser and Strauss stated that "the analyst starts thinking in terms of the full range of types or continua in the category, its dimensions, the conditions under which it is pronounced or minimized, its major consequences, its relation to other categories, and its other properties" (cited in Hampton, 1993, p. 277).

The intent of this data analysis is to review the interview materials and observations in order to extract data from a small number of highly skilled teachers and begin to build a preliminary theory of teacher's awareness of cultural diversity in the classroom.

A function of the analysis is to investigate common themes within the data and create a consciousness, but not necessarily agreement amongst readers. Glasser and Strauss contend that "joint coding and analysis of data is a more honest way to present findings and analysis", and the result is "that it generates theory more systematically" (cited in Berg, p. 191).

"Inductive analysis means that the patterns, themes and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis" (Patton, 1980, p. 390). This particular form of analysis fit nicely with the ethnographic research conducted in the study, as it enabled the researcher to retain the substance of the interviews and observations.

Analysis Format

The initial task of the analysis of the research question studied was to channel the data into themes, which unfolded as the information was examined based on commonalities. These themes were designated as the classroom, teacher and student. Next categories were defined by using the technique of a cross-case analysis, which involved the grouping of answers for each person interviewed. First, the role of the teacher was clarified. Second, the implication of teacher's values and beliefs regarding the classroom was addressed. Third, the need for information concerning the student's home environment and the value of knowing the student's academic background was reviewed. Fourth, the impact of classroom structure on the learning environment was discussed. Fifth, the nature of the learning environment and its

impact on the students was explored. Sixth, the teacher's cultural knowledge was discussed. Each category within the theme assisted in building the framework of the study, thus resulting in the emergence of the researcher's grounded theory.

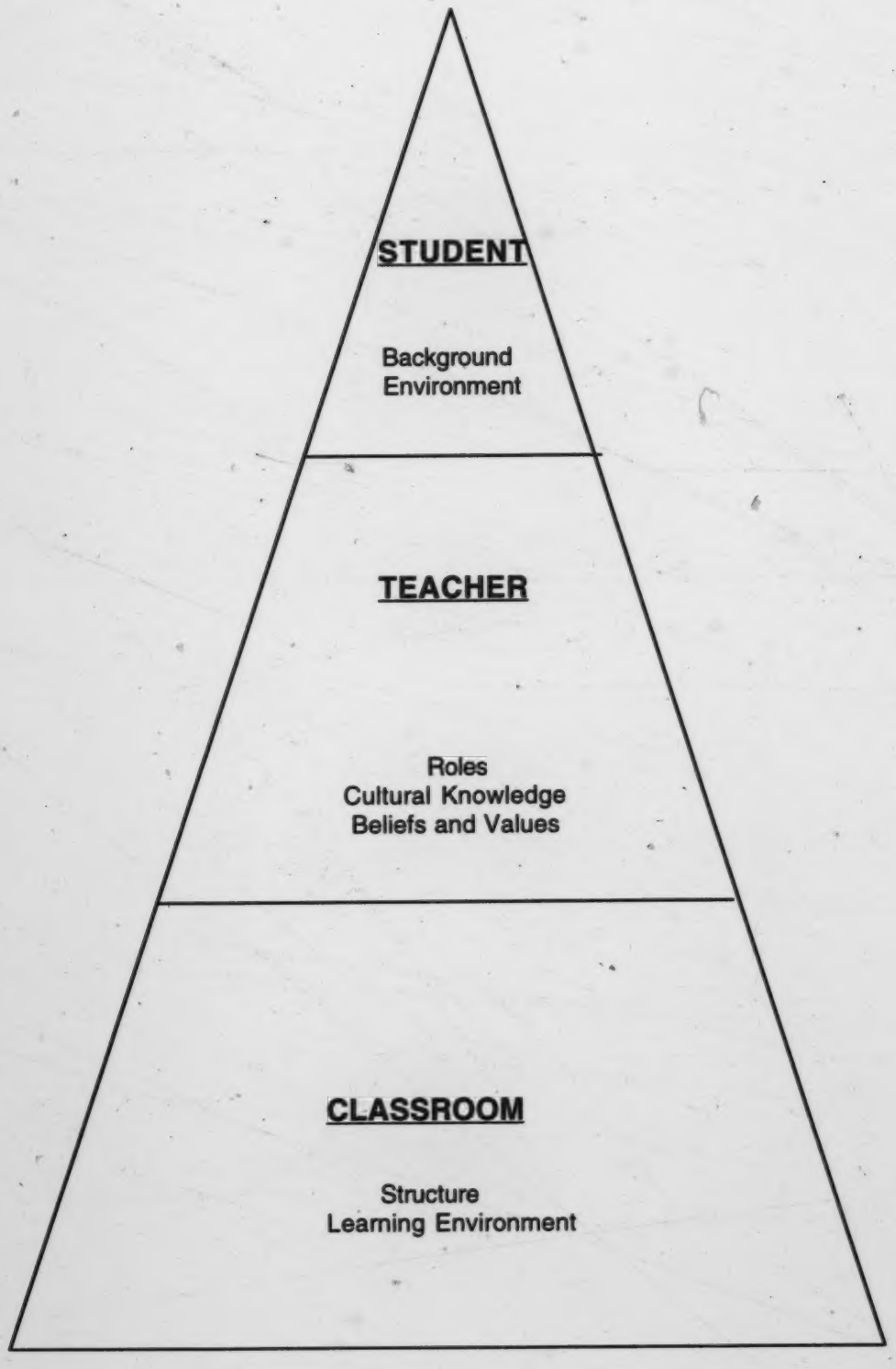
Identification and comparison of the themes and categories leads to a convergence or interconnectedness. The observation and interview data conjured meanings and those meanings were then interpreted into suggested principles related to cultural diversity and teacher's awareness
in the classroom. It must be made clear that the experiences and beliefs of the researcher may be a limitation and must be taken into account by the reader.

Following the recognition of this convergence, a diagram was developed to visually display the relationships between the themes and categories and their resulting impact in the classroom. It is the purpose of Diagram 1, to allow a pattern to emerge that will serve to identify the complexity of cultural diversity in the classroom and possibly provide a matrix for new approaches in teaching. The following section explores the pattern that evolved. (see Diagram 1, p. 49a)

A Framework for Comprehending the Data:
A Pyramid of Learning

Diagrammatically, from the data gathered in the study, classroom culture is represented in a pyramid form, as shown in Diagram 1. The classroom is seen as the building block or infrastructure in which to build a stable learning environment. Within the structure is placed a teacher whose beliefs, values and

The Pyramid of Learning Diagram 1



cultural knowledge and professional roles reside within the pyramid for a definitive period of time. Finally, the student, being the most mobile component, is situated at the top of the pyramid, where the consummate goal of the classroom and teacher is to have the student attain the pinnacle of success and ultimately move on to their next level of learning.

The next section addresses each category and develops the continua within the pyramid. Observations and interview data from the six participants will be incorporated as applicable. Any quotes taken directly from the interviews was distinguished by a two letter code. As well, examples of all observer's comments were recognized with a separate heading entitled observations. The author has also identified a common theme or principle at the end of each section. Student success is viewed as an individual goal, encompassing culturally diverse issuses related to individual needs. Throughout this section there was an effort to compose the pattern that unfolded out of the research and to transform this pattern into suggested principles concerning cultural diversity in the classroom.

The Classroom

The classroom is the constant of the pyramid as it exists indefinitely. It is admist these walls that the learning environment is formulated establishing it as the foundation of the pyramid of learning.

Classroom Structure

Through its physical stature and specific organizational guidelines, the structure of the classroom has a tremendous

potential impact on students. The teacher has the leadership and authority in the creation of classroom structure, however the decisions made will affect teachers via the student's reaction to particular structures.

AZ: Acceptance and tolerance comes from the initial set-up of the class and the expectations presented by the teacher.

Observation:

The classes visited all had a morning routine in which t the students were first greeted by the teachers, followed by a series of activities which were structured and familiar to the class. It was obvious that the children were confident and happy to be involved in the specific endeavors organized by the teachers.

FU: The structure of a classroom can build a positive environment.

BY: I decide the structure of the class, then we talk about the rules.

Observation:

Each classroom had visual reminders of classroom expectations posted indicating that they are taught and discussed with the students.

EV: The structure of the classroom allows control of

interactions and skills to be taught which in the long run will enable the children to cope in a non-structured environment.

Observation:

It was observed that throughout the day whenever there was a disruption or an issue that arose that challenged the classroom environment, the teachers involved in the study either discussed the situation with the child, small group or the large group, developing their skills as social beings.

It was agreed by all six participants that establishing a routine and maintaining a consistency was imperative to creating a positive learning environment. Rules need to become ingrained and most important to these teachers was making their students responsible for their own behavior. It was unanimous that the concept of respect was necessary for both students and teacher. In order to create a safe environment, the ground rules must be set at the beginning of the year. Specific lessons in how to take turns can be designed and incorporated into daily classroom activities. Developing an effective classroom structure involves being energetic and constantly searching for new ways to create the classroom culture that fits the needs of the students..

CX: *The first unit in Grade 1 Social Studies is "ME". It instills the importance of who you are, you're uniqueness and how it's important to work together as a group. Therefore, the rules are necessary.*

DW: Some situations might require children doing things, even if they don't do it at home; such as pick up after themselves. This is how the real world works-everyone does their share.

Observation:

Reminders regarding the guidelines in the classroom were ongoing in each of the classrooms visited.

AZ: I teach everyone the basic skills, such as blowing their nose. I assume everyone needs to learn this skill rather than pointing an individual out.

FU: I believe it is necessary to set the ground rules at the beginning of the year. I also like to build a rapport between us all. I show the students I like them and will listen and be fair.

BY: Respect is the key. I try to instill the idea of be the best you can be and that you are responsible for you.

Observation:

The classrooms observed contained a very strong element of appreciating each individual for who they are. This was obvious in the manner in which each child who had something to offer was given the opportunity at the appropriate time to speak. The expectation for the students and teacher was to respectfully listen.

EV: At the beginning of the year I make it a priority to ensure the kids get to know one another. I share about myself and my life. I also do an activity on roles-why we're here and what these roles entail. There is a reason to come to school and how it relates to the real world. It gives the students a common ground.

Observation:

Each class had a specific time set aside for indiviual students to share something of interest to them. The ground rules were well established and clearly the students had been taught how to behave appropriately in this kind of situation.

Principle:

The external structure of a classroom is fixed, however the internal elements are interrelated and affect the journey of the teacher, in their quest for building a pyramid for student success.

The Learning Environment

The learning environment which exists within the classroom walls, is a component of the classroom that is aligned with the physical structure to complete the base of the pyramid. As in the organization of the classroom structure, the development of the learning environment is in the hands of the teacher, influencing the actions and reactions of both students and teacher.

Teachers will tend to select a preferred teaching style that

they are comfortable with. When approaching a classroom of diverse students it is worthwhile considering one's teaching style and the consequences it may have on the students.

AZ: *I use a variety of teaching techniques to try to reach all children in my class. I try to minimize "teacher talk" and have the students engage in their own learning via centers, activities and cooperative strategies.*

Observation:

The classrooms studied incorporated the concept of independent learning and collaboration within the group as a part of their teaching styles. Within this structure was built classroom expectations and other than an occassional issue, bahavior was not a problem.

BY: *I try to give verbal and visual instructions. Then if individuals need specific help I can narrow it down to something that works for that child. I am also aware of trying to use music/art/drama etc. and sometimes I am more flexible than others.*

FU: *I use direct instruction to the whole class, small group instruction, learning centres and peer tutoring.*

EV: *I have borrowed the techniques that suit me. I try a little bit of everything. I know what works for me and do that but I also change styles according to the children in my room.*

DW: I use a variety of techniques to meet the variety of needs in the class and the variety of settings we are involved in within the school; such as the gym, computer class, centres, large group etc.

Observation:

The the teachers were conscious of the needs of particular students in the classroom activities. Adaptations were made throughout the day and students appeared to be very comfortable even if they were the students requiring the special attention.

It was unanimous amongst the six participants in the study that teachers need to accept their students for who and what they are. This acceptance works on the premise of basic human needs that everyone deserves an education, but that there are different ways to attain the same goals.

AZ: A variety of personalities and cultures makes the classroom interesting. We can't assume everyone will learn in the same way. We don't want to destroy that.

The participants were in agreement that in order to develop understanding amongst the students, issues should be addressed in the classroom as they arise, to allow the students to comprehend our uniqueness as individuals. This will enable them to realize why everyone in the class may not be working on the same activity. Furthermore, the participants maintained that by building on the students individual strengths and eliminating "put downs", they are

practicing and learning how to be respectful and understanding of one another. Building a flexible learning environment was of importance to the participants and being realistic about expectations demanded of the students they work with in the classroom was essential.

> *FU: Teachable moments- take advantage of what's happening in the classroom at the moment.*

The curriculum is a reality in all teacher's lives and they must be congnizant of it at all times when contemplating the learning environment of their classroom. The participants in the study clearly believed that it is essential to design the learning environment with the curriculum at the core. They also felt it was necessary to keep up with the ongoing curriculum changes.

> *DW: We are required to teach what's in the curriculum to students who don't follow or know the issues. We may need to give more background or teach in a different way but we must teach what is required.*

A primary concern for the participants was to foster the characteristic of independence in the children in their classrooms. Programs can be designed to allow children to work at their own pace. As well, when students are working independently, it permits the teachers to work with other individuals or small groups. A common skill that the participants agreed was essential was that of problem solving. They encouraged and assisted their students in establishing their ability to make decisions.

CX: I teach independence and responsibility for their future.

Observation:

The students in the classrooms observed were presented with many opportunities to choose the activity they wished to be involved in. The paramerters of the activity had obviously been well organized ahead of time. The children displayed confidence and self-respect in being given the opportunity to make their own decisions.

AZ: I teach them to problem solve as it will transfer to other situations in their lives, such as recess.

Observation:

During altercations witnessed in the classroom teachers first provided their students with a chance to work out t their own plan as to how they might best handle the situation. If this was not successful, it was observed that they worked through the scenario with them to an agreed upon conclusion.

The participants concurred that they focused on creating an environment that promoted favourable and effective interaction. They encouraged and grouped students to work together and help one another. This cooperative approach enabled students to learn from and work with a variety of people. The teachers conjectured that this format also provides the opportunity for the students to learn about the diversity of people and begin to develop ways to get along in the world.

FU: In cooperative learning teachers and students share their knowledge. They all learn different ideas and different ways.

AZ: I believe that children work and learn cooperatively from one another.

Observation:

Each teacher in the study had established their own style of cooperative learning in their classrooms. They felt that by designing activities in which students had to work together in partners, groups or individuals, they were providing them with life skills.

Each teacher involved in the study claimed that it was critical for them to adapt activities and arrange specific programs accordingly in the classroom, to meet the needs of every student. They shared the frustration with a possible lack of knowledge about a student's needs or the time to prepare and/or distribute the special program, as a relevant issue in the organization of their classrooms. To develop a nurturing environment, one which is comfortable and allows the students to take risks, was deemed to be very important. Recognizing individual accomplishments was an integral part of each participant's classroom. When necessary, teachers must modify the program, if it comes in conflict with personal beliefs. They aprroached this area cautiously.

DW: To accomodate for varied learners, I provide support along with the opportunity for the students to work

independently to their potential.

Observation:

The participants organized the work periods to suit the needs of the students. Once the activity was set up, any organization necessary for different kinds of learning was acceptable. For example, the student who needed more quiet time wore earphones and two students in a Reading class who were ahead of the others, were working on a special research project.

BY: We must meet all the kids needs- from high achievers to special needs children. It may mean restructuring the way I present the material. It also means lots of work.

Observation:

It was discovered that the six teachers in the study presented their material in a variety of approaches to accomodate for all the learners. In large groups, the activity was introduced through visual, auditory and kinesthetic modes. It was obvious the teachers knew their students well as they incorportated such things as specific eye contact, as well as any necessary tone of voice inflection or specific key words for the children who needed this assistance.

Principle:

The learning environment is a key issue in the classroom. In order for a teacher to fit comfortably within the the

pyramid of learning they must reflect on their teaching techniques and the impact they may have on their student's journey for success.

The Teacher

The teacher is the second most stable segment of the learning pyramid as they represent a constancy for the students. Generally, their duration within the classroom exceeds that of the students.

Teacher's Beliefs and Values

Teacher's beliefs and values do have relevance in the learning environment and can either build or destroy a successful pyramid. The participants all contended that students pick up things from teachers, so as teachers they must be aware of who they are and their values. Further, teacher's own beliefs are real and may conflict with members of their classroom. Hence, they must be willing to work with and listen to other views, searching for common ground. Learning to respect one another's viewpoint was felt to be an essential skill to work on in the classroom for both students and teachers. Initially, however there must be an acknowledgement from the teachers that this as a relevant issue. The teachers involved in the study had not consciously considered this subject until directly asked, but obviously from their responses, they have done some internal reflection.

FU: My basic values and belief systems are reflected in my

expectations for student behavior.

BY: I bring my values, prejudices, stresses etc. with me and I realize that they help create the atmosphere. I like to bring what I think is important and I am open to hearing about other approaches/ideas but I will do what I think would be best or what experience has shown to work best.

AZ: My expectations for myself, students and parents have a direct affect on my classroom.

EV: Who we are must affect the classroom a great deal. We, of course, try to be objective in all that we do but personality must come through.

Observation:

Each of the teachers in the study possesses their own personality which came through clearly in their teaching. It was percieved that this had an impact on the classroom atmosphere, particularly in the classroom structure. Classrooms were organized from their viewpoint and out of this developed the rules for the students.

The participants interviewed noted the benefits of informing their students of their values and beliefs. They believed that it builds respect and tolerance and that all relationships in life require these principles.

CX: *There must be communication and direct teaching regarding respect building in the classroom. It helps to build common goals. I feel it is necessary to teach what is important to me as a teacher and human being and also to discover what is important to the students.*

Observation:

It was noted that each study participant in the obsevation period, referred to their own personal life as it related to something that was going on in the classroom. An illustration of this was when one teacher commented on their frustration with math as a child and how they handled it. Another example, was a teacher talking with two students involved in an altercation, referried to a similiar experience he/she had, the solution and why it worked for them.

Principle:

Teacher's beliefs and values play and integral role in the building of the pyramid of learning. An initial consciousness of one's own value and belief system is the first step, followed by periodic reflection of any repercussions on the classroom. This is advantageous to the learning environment as it assists in creating a flexible milieu built for all the students. Additionally, constructing a classroom that develops respect and understanding of diversity assists in designing a sturdy pyramid of learning.

The Teacher's Role

Teachers have an enormous task and responsibility to ensuring that the pyramid of learning is functioning effectively. To define a teacher's position too specifically could be a fruitless undertaking as the duties differ according to the particular assignment and school. However, the six participants of this study shared some definite points of view on the matter of a teacher's role.

Of utmost significance to the teachers in the study, was that teachers take pleasure in their job. They believed that if teachers were unhappy, it would be difficult to build a positive learning environment.

> *DW: Teachers need to love their jobs and display a positive attitude.*

> *Observation:*
>
> *It was apparent that the participants took pleasure in their jobs as they all expressed a warm and caring attitude towards their students. This came through clearly in many ways, such as staying in at recess to help students, and maintaining eye contact and paying attention to a student when they talk.*

The positive environment that teachers cultivate evolves as they get to know their group of students.

Unfolding from a favourable classroom setting is the provision for students at any level to reach their potential. It was agreed that teachers must equip students with the skills necessary to recognize

their strengths and weaknesses, plus how to cope with and use them to their advantage.

All the participants agreed concerning the duty of a teacher, that it is important to demonstrate to the students that you care. This develops a safe environment that allows students to take risks.

Teachers must also be accountable for their actions and be able to speak to the learning environment they have created.

Finally, teachers must be committed, life-long learners. Learning can come from many different sources, the students themselves, experts in the field, colleagues, and parents. The teacher who exhibits the desire to learn, motivates and inspires students.

AZ: I believe it's necessary to treat each student as an individual by addressing the social, emotional and physical parts of a whole person.

Observation:

Each classroom observed provided the students with a varied program, encouraging the children to challenge and learn about themselves as a whole person. The programs within the classrooms were up to date and each of them commented on techniques they themselves had learned by attending inservices.

Principle:

A teacher should consider their role in relation to the other factors in the classroom. Through this reflection they will be able to build the optimum pyramid of learning.

The Teacher's Cultural Knowledge

Within present day classrooms resides a diverse population. It is a challenge for teachers to balance the needs of all of students. The first stage in accepting this challenge is to acknowledge the distinctiveness of each individual and then strive to enhance the learning environment with the opportunities presented and the resources available.

The participants surmised that children in the early elementary school years do not appear to be aware of differences regarding the exterior visual characteristics of their classmates. What students do seem to notice is their social interactions, based on those observations they form their opinions and views on one. The teachers involved in the study questioned whether or not the an issue was one of beliefs and values or one of personality.

With respect to handling the many points of view that may emerge in the classroom, the participants in the study had some definite ideas. They all agreed that they do their best to provide students with the opportunity to express their opinions. All these teachers focused on the need to be a good listener, and have an open mind, this enabled them to better understand where their students are coming from. Transferring these skills to their students, encouraging them to learn that not everyone views life the same, developing their ability to understand others, and promoting their decision making skills were viewed as essential.

EV: I work hard at accepting my students points of view. I have he students explain them. Our unit in Social Studies emphasizes understanding people's customs and

traditions. We return to these ideas frequently...would you want to give up your ideas?...give up your customs?

Observation:

The teachers all made use of teachable moments. For example, following a student's "show and tell" the t teacher used the globe to talk about where we live in relation to where the student was from. Another instance was a teacher keeping track daily of what the students ate for breakfast and using this as a point of discussion for different cultures as well as healthy eating habits.

CX: I respect and expect students to respect others points of views by not laughing at others and encouraging them to give different ideas through their responses. A mistake is an opportunity to learn. I give lots of positive feedback to all points of view.

The six members of the study were consistent on the subject of culture in the classroom regarding the advantages of talking about how we are different and how we are the same. They felt that children engage in conversation regarding this topic quite easily so the opportunity to build understanding and positive interaction is attainable. Providing the time for students to share about their culture encourages everyone to feel good about who they are. It was agreed that this creates tolerance, establishes respect and explores commonalities that we all have. Each of the contributors believed that there are many opportunities in the classroom to build in

activities that address cultural issues whether they be organized programs or engaging in discussions as situations arise.

BY: *I use the Lyons Quest Program. This is an excellent program that deals with daily living skills and focuses on values and beliefs. If students beliefs are contrary, the teacher can use this time to talk about how we view things differently.*

AZ: *Social studies can tie in nicely to talking about cultures and it encourages the sharing of knowledge. It makes students proud of who they are.*

EV: *I use traditions and customs that come up in the classroom as a teachable moment. We talk about it in class. I encourage the students to share and others to question. It builds knowledge, awareness and respect.*

Observation:

All the teachers involved in this study made a conscious effort to continually praise students for their effort. One teacher working with a student having difficulty with an activity said, "it's kind of hard remembering all those things".

The study participants involved in the study noted the significance of their students arriving in their classroom with many of their attitudes, behaviors and beliefs in place. It is a priority for all of them to integrate the values and beliefs of the family

comfortably and respectfully into their classrooms. They also commented on the affect of family attitudes on children's behavior, motivation and interest in school relative to academic success. The teachers in the study also highlighted other issues that displayed their cultural knowledge. Issues such as; the type of family a child lives in, number of siblings, language barriers, economic restrictions and choice of peers can all impact the student within the structure of the learning environment.

EV: I have changed my scheduling to meet the needs of a native student who is continually late so they don't miss things that they really need. The families view of time is different. It doesn't affect the other students so there is no disruption.

CX: The expectations of the parents can cause competitiveness.

DW: Being the youngest in the family or in a blended family can create noticeable differences in students.

Observation:

The conversations going on in the classroom indicated that the teachers were aware of the student's family situations. An illustration of this is in the recording of books read in the reading program and how the teacher positively handled the few students who were not participating. by inquiring of the other children how they got their family involved. Another was a student

arriving late to school and the teacher proposing that they have their older sister help them get there on time.

The participants in the study were convinced that it is vital to identify, appreciate and accept others beliefs and values and incorporating this into their program, in a variety of ways, was a priority. Clearly, the benefits of learning together about ourselves and each other, was a way to build a productive learning environment.

FU: Teachers need to be aware of student's culture. They must be prepared to learn and empathise with their students by being supportive of their traditions.

CX: Teachers must know the differences. They need to teach everyone to respect each other, accomodate for differences and teach them how to work well together.

Observation:

The framework of the six classrooms observed stemmed from the recognition of the teachers recognizing the uniqueness of each individual student and their needs. A situation which emphasised that they are specifically taught to work together, related to a student in one of the classes making fun of another when working in a group situation and without the help of the teacher a concerned child suggested that this was not appropriate behavior. Respect is a global concern, and it begins with the teacher, as illustrated in two situations in

which the teacher specifically thanked the students for reminding them of something.

Principle:

A teacher must be mindful of the many differences between the students whose lives they touch. They must then take this knowledge and furnish their students with the gift of understanding and working with others.

The Student's Background Environment

The student resides at the peak of the pyramid of learning, as they are the most transient, yet important element. Their time within the classroom walls is generally a year, requiring a quick response to their learning environment. Therefore, teacher's awareness and swift response to a student's needs are necessary, to nurture and cultivate the teaching and learning milieu.

The teachers interviewed were like-minded in their opinions regarding knowledge of their student's background environment. They maintained that there is significant merit in becoming aware of the student's backgrounds in order to accomodate for their needs. Information such as family structure, religious beliefs, language issues, personality quirks and learning requirements were stated as necessary to be cognizent of. Knowing more about their students, enabled teachers to detect changes that could have a negative affect on their success in the classroom. Teachers also felt that they were better equipped to construct a successful program for their students, thereby strengthening the pyramid of learning.

AZ: The home environment and family activities have an

impact on learning.

Observation:

All of the participants in the research alluded to their student's home life in the opening activities of the day. One teacher inquired as to whether or not they had won their hockey game the night before and another asked a child if he had fun at his dad's birthday party. In another situation the teacher queried as to whether or not the parents had arrived home from their business trip.

EV: I have no special needs student but I do have many students with unique personalities that causes me to be creative with my planning.

Observation:

Preparing the daily schedule was obviously a priority of all the teachers in the study. On paper they plot out the plans, highlighting any specific points to remember about the situation and particular students. They all kept these plans handy on their desks and even though they never sat down, they occasionally referred to them.

The participants acquired the background environment information in a variety of ways. Accessing previous teachers, personal student files, registration forms, siblings, their school's initial open house, parent-teacher interviews, parent volunteers, phone calls and an open door policy helped to create a more well rounded picture of each student. A combination of these activities

provides a significant amount of information. However, according to the teachers in this study, the primary source in discovering the key to each student's learning needs, was to observe, talk to and listen to the children about their interests and beliefs. By acquainting oneself with each student as a whole person, the teacher has the potential to develop the best learning environment for their students.

DW: I like contact with all the parents of my students. I phone them with positive information as well as concerns. I write lots of notes home. The communication makes it easier if there is a problem as the parents are much easier to approach.

Observation:

Two of the teachers received notes from students as they entered the class responding to notes sent home the day before. The other four teachers were approached by a parent regarding their child. The teachers displayed a comfort and openess with these times.

Communication is a key issue in gaining insight into the whole child. The participants expressed that it is essential in bridging the gap between home and school and building support in the pyramid of learning. In order to develop this communication specifically designed undertakings must be planned. The collective array of ideas include: monthly newsletters, a homework hotline, parent-teacher interviews, reading programs, journals, phone calls, and invitations to special classroom and school events.

FU: I believe that it is important to get information about my students from their parents. I also feel that my job is to communicate through notes and newsletters what is going on in the classroom. This is of benefit to the students, parents and me.

Observation:

Two of the teachers were in the process of completing their newsletter to the parents. All of the classrooms had sharing time and four out of the six had a time set aside for the students to write in their journals.

Ultimately, the teachers believed that the parents of their students have a huge influence over their children's schooling, consequently, an impact on the pyramid of learning. Students whose parents view learning as important are most often the positive learners in the classroom. This attitude can sometimes transfer and be motivating to other students in the classroom. If issues such as the inability to communicate in English, specific philosophical matters or changes in behavior arose, the participants addressed the situation by communicating with the home to discuss the situation.

BY: I like to hear from the parents. The feedback informs me of how I am doing and whether or not I need to change things to make the classroom more effective.

Observation:

One of the teachers received a phone call regarding the take home reading program at recess time. It was obvious it was appreciated and caused the teacher to

change the approach in the program for that particular child.

Principle:

The contribution of the student's background to the learning environment is powerful and must be considered by teachers in the development of their programs. Teachers have an obligation to become aware of where their students are coming from and by doing this they can be assured that they have provided each student with every opportunity of success, within the pyramid of learning.

Chapter 5

Issues, Implications and Conclusions

The research study focused on the examination of cultural diversity in the classroom; the two primary questions are:

1. Are teachers aware of classroom culture?
2. What is their response to it?

The author addressed the question through borrowed techniques of ethnography, which included interviews and observations, and viewed only from the teacher's perspective.

Issues

It was considered essential to first determine the meaning of culture and diversity, in order to establish the value of teachers becoming aware of such information in the classroom. The definition of culture and diversity, chosen and recorded in Chapter 1, related well to the three areas of cognition, emotion and behavior, prevalent issues in a learning environment. As well, it implied the magnitude of culture, which reflects the need for educators to be constantly aware and prepared for this diversity.

The value in studying culture, understanding the connection between behavior and culture, respecting, recording and celebrating cultures and developing a positive self-image is a basis for building cultural knowledge. A child's point of entry into schools is one of naivete, secure in what they know of their own culture. Just as children are taught about their own culture, so must they be taught about the diversity of other cultures. This necessitates that the school be connected to social reform, with the potential to bridge the gaps between culture that have been created over time.

The environment in which the teacher and students are immersed has a substantial impact on learning. It has been established in other studies that through cooperative learning achievement levels increase. Individual involvement in ones own education and recognition of cultural worth will develop healthy, empathetic and productive individuals, who are able to view the world from new perspectives. This in turn fosters the positive growth of cultural diversity.

Teachers have the power to nurture and develop the potential of every student. It is within their ability to meet the individual needs of the students in the learning environment. With careful planning, involvement in the change process, knowledge and awareness of their students and one's own culture, teachers can embrace diversity and celebrate it with their students. The necessity for preservice training including cultural diversity as a mandatory component of course work is apparent. Therefore, with increased teacher awareness of culture, the goal of equitable education and the growth of cultural tolerance and understanding could be achieved.

It is imperative that the content of what is taught in the schools be examined to determine how it supports diversity. Diversity content should be integrated into the curriculum change, clearly stating it as a priority for educators and assisting in the development of a consciousness in the students. It is apparent that curriculum is only the first step, the next being the teachers committment to and recognition of the need for cultural insight to be addressed in their classroom.

Finally, since school days and home life affect each other in often subtle and inexplicable ways, it is increasingly important to understand and accept diversity. Schools tend to label children according to the status quo and have either refused or were unable to deal with cultural diversity, therefore preventing changes in the learning environment. If the opportunity does not exist in the classroom for students to reach their personal potential then "education for all" is implausible. Empowered with the fact that we are all interconnected, schools can take the leading role in providing students with the skills to live effectively in a global world.

Implications

There are definite implications with respect to a teacher's awareness and response to cultural diversity in the classroom. Awareness and response will affect the teaching and learning environment. Michael Knapp stated that "in classrooms where teachers actively or proactively engineer constructive responses to student differences, students may have a better chance of success in both basic and higher-order skills" (1995). Knapp's research, observed 68 classrooms to determine the effect of teaching for meaning, by connecting to the needs of the children. The results implied that those teachers who built their program incorporating the differences as learning opportunities, were more successful with their students.

Implications related to developing teacher's awareness and response to cultural diversity in the classroom are:

1. to provide teachers with knowledge regarding diversity through inservicing from experts in the field
2. to provide the needed support within the classroom to develop the best learning envrionment
3. to provide needed time to become aware of the student's backgrounds
4. to provide pre-service teachers with relevant course work and experience to cope with diverse classrooms.

The impact of a teacher being cognizant of their student's needs and responding to them in the creation of programs is essential. The inclusion of knowledge, appreciation, concern, and accommodation within the curriculum and instruction to diverse needs is essential to the development of a sturdy pyramid of learning.

Conclusion

Postman (1995), believes that the challenges schools and educators

face cannot be solved solely by them alone. Referring to this challenge he asks the question, "can a coherent, stable, unified culture be created out of people of diverse traditions, languages, personalities, learning styles and religions?" (1995, p. 8). He believes that it is essential to address these issues to create this culture within cultures in today's classrooms.

The purpose of this study was to explore how six teachers approached cultural diversity in the classroom, by studying their awareness of, and responses to it. The conclusions are based purely on the experiences of the six teachers and are considered introductory and speculative. Nevertheless the significance of the findings warrants considerable attention.

If teachers are to become aware of diversity in the classroom, in order to create an effective learning environment, attention must be given to:

1. the awareness of student culture
2. the respect of student culture
3. the understanding of how students can most effectively learn
4. the design of programs that motivate and meet student's needs
5. the integration of student culture into the curriculum
6. the connection of student home life encounters to the curruculum
7. the knowledge of student background and family
8. the awareness of teachers' own cultural bias, values and beliefs.

The teachers that participated in the study all expressed in their interview an awareness and knowledge regarding cultural diversity in the classroom. The observations clearly indicated that although inconsistent, direct action was taken to provide for the diversity of students the classrooms thus indicating a gap at times between awareness and response. The positive reactions of the teachers on completion of the interview in having time to discuss these issues, is of relevance to providing a learning environment for success. It suggests that conversation and knowledge sharing amongst professionals, students and their families would further awareness and action, to assist in reaching all children in each of their classrooms.

It is essential that teachers view each student as having a unique learning and communication style, value system, personal and family

expectations, and a familiar pattern of living when they arrive in the classroom. Educators must shift towards a change in the foundation of their classroom, concentrating not only on the areas of pedagogy, management and instruction but also investing in some personal reflection of their own views of the world. These changes may ultimately result in alternatives to the standard framework, which in time will enable the teacher to enter the pyramid of learning with new insight and skills. Only then, will teachers be assurred they have presented each individual student with an exceptional learning environment.

The conclusions in this study are similarily endorsed by Powell's statement; "the pluralistic focus, which requires us to accomodate for diversity in the education process, from the standpoint of a culture other than one's own, means accepting as valid the culturally different learner's values, their motives, the rewards that are meaningful to them, their locus of control, their linguistic system, their learning style and their cognitive style" (1997, p. 14). Obviously, it is mutually beneficial for educators to celebrate diversity and believe in the potential benefits that can be invoked in the education process.

Reflections

By undertaking this study I placed myself in a vulnerable, yet stimulating position. Prior to commencing the research, it was critical that I state my own philosophy regarding diversity and attempt to evaluate myself as a classroom teacher in this respect. I was fascinated to note how my perceptions altered as the research continued. There is no doubt that the interview and observation process has allowed me to attain another level in teaching through the reflection process following each session.

Certainly, my belief that it is necessary to recognize each individual for their unique qualities and build a program in my classroom with this in mind, is even stronger on completion of the project. I found it refreshing that each participant in the study commented that they rarely discussed these kind of issues and that they appreciated the freedom to do so in their interviews. Perhaps there is a message here that someplace teachers need to have more opportunities to share concerns and ideas about education.

This research is by no means complete. I am now able to more clearly and cognitively understand the framework for the pyramid of learning in my future classrooms. The content of this study is simply an initial attempt to bring to the forefront, a topic that I maintain is of utmost importance to the student's attainment of the pinnacle of success in the classroom.

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